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ABSTRACT

This document is a collection of 108 quotations concerning the U.S. Constitution. The quotations are from men who fought for the ratification of the Constitution, U.S. Presidents, U.S. Supreme Court Justices, and leaders of other nations. Some of the quotations are also from U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The sayings are arranged in approximate chronological order within topics relating to the specific article of the Constitution to which they refer. General quotations appear in the section on the Preamble. A list of sources for the quotations and an index of persons quoted is also included. (SM)

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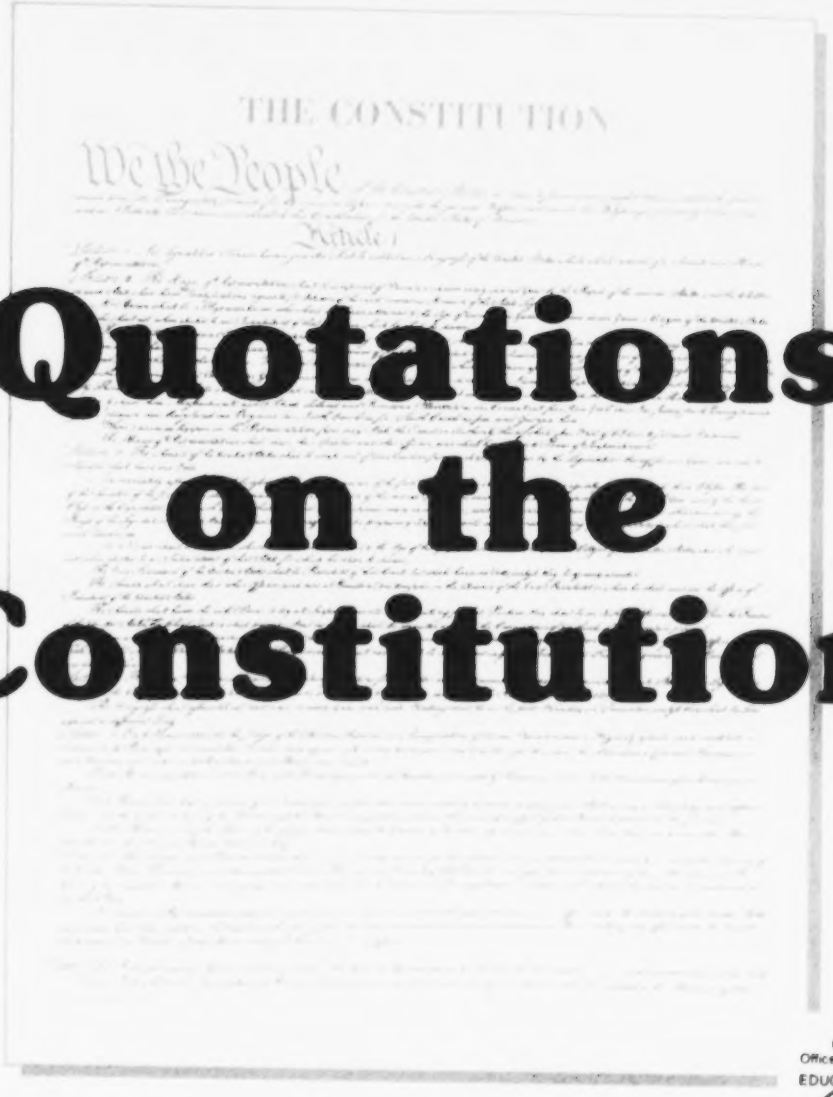

Quotations on the Constitution

January 1987

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INTRODUCTION

To mark the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution and the Army's 1987 theme, "The Constitution," the Pentagon Library presents the following collection of quotations on the nation's fundamental law. The sayings are arranged in approximate chronological order under the heading of the article of the Constitution with which they deal; general quotations appear in the section on the Preamble. A list of sources for the quotations and an index of persons quoted is also included.

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THE PREAMBLE -- WE THE PEOPLE

1. No man is a warmer advocate for proper restraints and wholesome checks in every department of government than I am; but I have never yet been able to discover the propriety of placing it absolutely out of the power of men to render essential services, because a possibility remains of their doing ill.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Letter to Bushrod Washington
November 10, 1787

2. A spirit of accommodation was the basis of the present constitution.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Letter to David Stuart
March 28, 1790

3. To every description of citizens, indeed, let praise be given. But let them persevere in their affectionate vigilance over that precious depository of American happiness, the Constitution of the United States.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Sixth Annual Message to Congress
November 19, 1794

4. The habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding, in the exercise of the power of one department, to encroach upon another.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Farewell Address
September 17, 1796

5. I doubt, too, whether any convention we can obtain may be able to make a better Constitution; for when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected?

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
Speech to Constitutional Convention,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
September 17, 1787

6. Our Constitution is in actual operation; everything appears to promise that it will last; but in this world nothing is certain but death and taxes.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
Letter to Jean-Baptiste Leroy
November 13, 1789

7. A constitution is a thing antecedent to a government, and a government is only the creature of a constitution. The constitution of a country is not the act of its government, but of the people constituting its government.

THOMAS PAINE
THE RIGHTS OF MAN
1791

8. Our national constitution, the ark of our safety, and grand palladium of our happiness.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
1800

9. The Constitution of the United States is the result of the collected wisdom of our country.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to Amos Marsh
November 20, 1801

10. A constitution has been acquired, which though neither of us thinks perfect, yet both consider as competent to render our fellow citizens the happiest and the securest on whom the sun has ever shone.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to John Adams
October 28, 1813

11. Every word of [the Constitution] decides a question between power and liberty.

JAMES MADISON
"Charters," NATIONAL GAZETTE
January 19, 1792

12. Our Constitution professedly rests upon the good sense and attachment of the people. This basis, weak as it may appear, has not yet been found to fail.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS
Letter to William Vans Murray

January 27, 1801

13. The Constitution...is a charter of limited powers.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS
1825

14. A good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY
"Milton," EDINBURGH REVIEW
August 1825

15. We have received [the Constitution] as the work of the assembled wisdom of the nation; we have trusted to it as to the sheet anchor of our safety in the stormy times of conflict with a foreign or domestic foe; we have looked to it with sacred awe as the palladium of our liberties.

ANDREW JACKSON
Proclamation
December 10, 1832

16. The Constitution is still the object of our reverence, the bond of our Union, our defense in danger, the source of our prosperity in peace.

ANDREW JACKSON
Proclamation
December 10, 1832

17. Experience, the unerring test of all human undertakings, has shown the wisdom and foresight of those who formed [the Constitution] and has proved that in the union of these States there is a sure foundation for the brightest hopes of freedom and for the happiness of the people. At every hazard and by every sacrifice this Union must be preserved.

ANDREW JACKSON
Farewell Address
March 4, 1837

18. A sacred instrument.

MARTIN VAN BUREN
1837

19. One Country, one Constitution, one Destiny.

DANIEL WEBSTER
Speech
March 15, 1837

20. We may be tossed upon an ocean where we can see no land--nor, perhaps, the sun or stars. But there is a chart and a compass for us to study, to consult, and to obey. That chart is the Constitution.

DANIEL WEBSTER
Speech at Springfield, Massachusetts
September 29, 1847

21. The Constitution of the thirteen States was made, not merely for the generation which then existed, but for posterity--undefined, unlimited, permanent and perpetual.

HENRY CLAY
Speech in the Senate
February 6, 1850

22. Like the Christian faith...when it is genuine, good results will inevitably flow from a sincere belief in a strict construction of the Constitution.

JAMES BUCHANAN
Letter to Central Southern Rights Association of Virginia
April 10, 1851

23. There is nothing stable but Heaven and the Constitution.

JAMES BUCHANAN
May 13, 1856

24. Don't interfere with anything in the Constitution. That must be maintained, for it is the only safeguard of our liberties.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
Speech at Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 27, 1856

25. All this is not the result of accident. It has a philosophical cause. Without the Constitution and the Union, we could not have attained the result; but even these, are not the primary cause of our great prosperity. There is something back of these, entwining itself more closely about the human heart. That something, is the principle of "Liberty to all"--the principle that clears the path for all--gives hope to all--and, by consequence, enterprise, and industry to all.

The expression of that principle, in our Declaration of Independence, was most happy, and fortunate. Without this, as well as with it, we could have declared our independence of Great Britain; but without it, we could not, I think, have secured our free government, and consequent prosperity. No oppressed people will fight, and endure, as our fathers did, without the promise of something better, than a mere change of masters.

The assertion of that principle, at that time, was the word, "fitly spoken" which has proved an "apple of gold" to us. The Union, and the Constitution, are the picture of silver, subsequently framed around it. The picture was made, not to conceal, or destroy the apple; but to adorn, and preserve it. The picture was made for the apple--not the apple for the picture.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
"Fragment on the Constitution and the Union"
c. 1860

26. I hold that in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution the Union of these states is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. Continue to execute all the express provisions of our National Constitution, and the Union will endure forever, it being impossible to destroy it except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
First Inaugural Address
March 4, 1861

27. It has been said, and I believe truly, that the Constitution itself is not altogether such as any one of its framers would have preferred. It was the joint work of all; and certainly the better that it was so.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
Opinion on the draft
September 14, 1863

28. All that is valuable in the Constitution is one thousand years old.

WENDELL PHILLIPS
Speech at Boston, Massachusetts
February 17, 1861

29. I intend to stand by the Constitution as it is, insisting upon a compliance with all its guarantees. I intend to stand by it as the sheet anchor of the Government; and I trust and hope, though it seems to be running between Charybdis and Scylla, the rock on the one hand and the whirlpool on the other, that it will be preserved, and will remain a beacon to guide, and an example to be imitated by all the nations of the earth. Yes, I intend to hold on to it as the chief ark of our

safety, as the palladium of our civil and our religious liberty.... It is the last hope of human freedom.

ANDREW JOHNSON
Speech to the Senate
December 18-19, 1860

30. Honest conviction is my courage; the Constitution is my guide.

ANDREW JOHNSON
Speech in Washington, D.C.
February 22, 1866

31. The time has come to take the Constitution down, to unroll it, to reread it, and to understand its provisions thoroughly.

ANDREW JOHNSON
Speech in Washington, D.C.
February 22, 1866

32. It is not strange that the framers of the Constitution, which had no model in the past, should not have fully comprehended the excellence of their own work.

ANDREW JOHNSON

33. Who is the United States? Not the judiciary; not the President; but the sovereign power of the people, exercised through their representatives in Congress, with the concurrence of the executive.

THADDEUS STEVENS
Speech in the House of
Representatives
December 18, 1865

34. That the Legislative, Executive and Judicial powers of Government ought to be forever separate and distinct from each other; and no person exercising the functions of one of said Departments shall assume or discharge the duties of any other.

DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF MARYLAND
Article VIII
August 17, 1867

35. The Constitution, in all its provisions, looks to an indestructible Union, composed of indestructible States.

SALMON P. CHASE
Texas v. White
April 12, 1869

36. The American Constitution is the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man.

W.E. GLADSTONE
"Kin Beyond the Sea," NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW
Sept.-Oct. 1878

37. When we look down upon 100 years and see the origin of our Constitution, when we contemplate all its trials and triumphs, when we realize how completely the principles upon which it is based have met every national need and national peril, how devoutly should we say with Franklin, "God governs in the affairs of men," how solemn should be the thought that to us is delivered this ark of the people's covenant, and to us is given the duty to shield it from impious hands.

GROVER CLEVELAND
Speech at Constitutional Centennial celebration, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
September 1887

38. When the experiment of our Government was undertaken, the chart adopted for our guidance was the Constitution. Departure from the lines there laid down is failure. It is only by strict adherence to the direction they indicate and by restraint within the limitations they fix that we can furnish proof to the world of the fitness of the American people for self-government.

GROVER CLEVELAND
Fourth Annual Message to Congress
December 3, 1888

39. The Constitution of 1789 deserves the veneration with which the Americans have been accustomed to regard it. It is true that many criticisms have been passed upon its arrangement, upon its omissions, upon the artificial character of some of the institutions it creates .... Yet, after all deductions, it ranks above every other written constitution for the intrinsic excellence of its scheme, its adapta-

tion to the circumstances of the people, the simplicity, brevity, and precision of its language, its judicious mixture of definiteness in principle with elasticity in details.

JAMES BRYCE
THE AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH
1888

40. The statesmen who met in 1787 were earnestly patriotic. They unselfishly desired the welfare of their countrymen. They were cool, resolute men, of strong convictions, with clear insight into the future. They were thoroughly acquainted with the needs of the community for which they were to act. Above all, they possessed that inestimable quality, so characteristic of their race, hard-headed common sense. Their theory of government was a very high one; but they understood perfectly that it had to be accommodated to the shortcomings of the average citizen.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT
GOUVERNEUR MORRIS
1888

41. The Constitution was not made to fit us like a strait jacket. In its elasticity lies its chief greatness.

WOODROW WILSON
Address in New York, New York
November 19, 1904

42. The Constitution of the United States is not a mere lawyers' document, it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age.

WOODROW WILSON
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT
1908

43. The Constitution was not meant to hold the government back to the time of horses and wagons.

WOODROW WILSON
CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT
1908

44. The Constitution is now, like Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights, only the sap-centre of a system of government vastly larger than the stock from which it has branched--a system some of whose forms have only very indistinct and rudimental beginnings in the simple substance of the Constitution, and which exercises many functions apparently quite foreign to the primitive properties contained in the fundamental law.

The Constitution itself is not a complete system; it takes none but the first steps in organization. It does little more than lay a foundation of principles. It provides with all possible brevity for the establishment of a government having, in several distinct branches, executive, legislative, and judicial powers. It vests executive power in a single chief magistrate, for whose election and inauguration it makes carefully definite provision, and whose privilges and prerogatives it defines with succinct clearness; it grants specifically enumerated powers of legislation to a representative Congress, outlining the organization of the two houses of that body...; and it establishes a Supreme Court with ample authority.... Here the Constitution's work of organization ends, and the fact that it attempts nothing more is its chief strength. For it to go beyond elementary provisions would be to lose elasticity and adaptability. The growth of the nation and the consequent development of the governmental system would snap asunder a constitution which could not adapt itself to the measure of the new conditions of an advancing society. If it could not stretch itself to the measure of the times, it must be thrown off and left behind, as a by-gone device; and there can, therefore, be no question that our Constitution has proved lasting because of its simplicity. It is a cornerstone, not a complete building; or, rather, to return to the old figure, it is a root, not a perfect vine.

WOODROW WILSON
CONGRESSIONAL GOVERNMENT
1885

45. It [the Constitution] is an experiment, as all life is an experiment.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES
1919

46. ...When we are dealing with words that also are a constituent act, like the Constitution of the United States, we must realize that they have called into life a being the development of which could not have been foreseen completely by the most gifted of its begetters. It was enough for them to realize or to hope that they had created an organism; it has taken a century and has cost their successors much sweat and blood to prove that they created a nation.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES
Missouri v. Holland
April 19, 1920

47. To support the Constitution, to observe the laws, is to be true to our own higher nature. That is the path, and the only path, towards liberty.... Liberty is not collective, it is personal. All liberty is individual liberty.

CALVIN COOLIDGE
Speech in Washington, D.C.
September 21, 1924

48. The United States Constitution has proved itself the most marvelously elastic compilation of rules of government ever written.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
Radio speech
March 2, 1930

49. Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form. That is why our constitutional system has proved itself the most superbly enduring political mechanism the modern world has produced.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
First Inaugural Address
March 4, 1933

50. The Constitution of the United States was a layman's document, not a lawyer's contract....

For us the Constitution is a common bond, without bitterness, for those who see America as Lincoln saw it, "the last, best hope of earth."

So we revere it, not because it is old but because it is ever new, not in the worship of its past alone but in the faith of the living who keep it young, now and in the years to come.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
Address on Constitution Day,
Washington, D.C.
September 17, 1937

51. The Constitution...is what living men and women think it is.

CHARLES A. BEARD
1936

52. The British race have always abhorred arbitrary and absolute government in every form. The great men who founded the American Constitution expressed this same separation of authority in the strongest and most durable form. Not only did they divide executive,

legislative and judicial functions, but also by instituting a federal system they preserved immense and sovereign rights to local communities and by all these means they have maintained--often at some inconvenience--a system of law and liberty under which they thrived and reached the physical and, at this moment, the moral leadership of the world.

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL
Speech in Woodford, England
January 28, 1950

53. The Constitution, of course, is still in force--but it is a solemn contract made in the name of "We the People"--and it is an agreement that should be renewed by each generation.

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY
Address in Washington, D.C.
April 16, 1959

54. My faith in the Constitution is whole--complete--total.

BARBARA JORDAN
NEWSWEEK
July 4, 1976

55. It is by choice, not by imposition, that the Constitution is the supreme law of our Land. As we approach the bicentennial of this charter, each of us has a personal obligation to acquaint ourselves with it and with its central role in guiding our Nation. While a constitution may set forth rights and liberties, only the citizens can maintain and guarantee those freedoms. Active and informed citizenship is not just a right; it is a duty.

RONALD REAGAN
Proclamation 4858--Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1981
September 16, 1981

56. The Constitution is what we did with our Independence. This [the Bicentennial] is a unique opportunity for a history and civics lesson for all of us.

WARREN E. BURGER
November 1985

57. To take a single step beyond the boundaries...specially drawn around the powers of Congress, is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of any definition.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bill for Establishing a National Bank
February 15, 1791

58. The delicate duty of devising schemes of revenue should be left where the Constitution has placed it--with the immediate representatives of the people.

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON
Inaugural Address
March 4, 1841

59. One great object of the Constitution was to restrain majorities from oppressing minorities or encroaching upon their just rights. Minorities have a right to appeal to the Constitution as a shield against such oppression. That the blessings of Liberty which our Constitution secures may be enjoyed alike by minorities and majorities, the Executive has been wisely invested with a qualified veto upon the acts of the Legislature.

JAMES KNOX POLK
Inaugural Address
March 4, 1845

60. Upon you, fellow-citizens, as the representatives of the States and the people, is wisely devolved the legislative power.

MILLARD FILLMORE
First Annual Message to Congress
December 2, 1850

61. I never discussed the Constitution very much, and I never made many speeches upon it, but I have done a good deal of fighting for it.

LIEUT. GEN. PHILIP SHERIDAN
Response to the Toast to the Army, Constitution Centennial Celebration, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
September 1887

62. There is a power in public opinion in this country--and I thank God for it; for it is the most honest and best of all powers--which will not tolerate an incompetent or unworthy man to hold in his weak or wicked hands the lives and fortunes of his fellow-citizens. This power operates alike upon the Government and the incumbent. The former dare not disregard it, and the latter can have no adequate wish that they should, when he once knows the estimation in which he is held. This public ordeal, therefore, is of great value; in my opinion, much more so than what has, with some propriety, been called the scare-crow of the constitution--the power of impeachment.

MARTIN VAN BUREN
1826

63. The national will is the supreme law of the Republic, and on all subjects within the limits of his constitutional powers should be faithfully obeyed by the public servant.

MARTIN VAN BUREN
First Annual Message to Congress
December 5, 1837

64. I am determined to uphold the Constitution...to the utmost of my ability and in defiance of all personal consequences. What may happen to an individual is of little importance, but the Constitution of the country, or any of its great and clear principles and provisions, is too sacred to be surrendered under any circumstances whatever by those who are charged with its protection and defense.

JOHN TYLER
Protest to the House of
Representatives
August 30, 1842

65. The preservation of the Constitution from infraction is the President's highest duty.... The President's power is negative merely, and not affirmative. He can enact no law.... Any attempt to coerce the President to yield his sanction to measures which he can not approve would be a violation of the spirit of the Constitution, palpable and flagrant, and if successful would break down the independence of the executive department, and make the President,

elected by the people and clothed by the Constitution with power to defend their rights, the mere instrument of a majority of Congress.

JAMES KNOX POLK
Fourth Annual Message to Congress
December 5, 1848

66. The appointing power vested in the President imposes delicate and onerous duties. So far as it is possible to be informed, I shall make honesty, capacity, and fidelity indispensible prerequisites to the bestowal of office, and the absence of either of these qualities shall be deemed sufficient cause for removal.

ZACHARY TAYLOR
Inaugural Address
March 5, 1849

67. I take the official oath to-day with no mental reservations and with no purpose to construe the Constitution by any hypercritical rules.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
First Inaugural Address
March 4, 1861

68. Public officers are the servants and agents of the people, to execute the laws which the people have made and within the limits of a Constitution which they have established.

GROVER CLEVELAND
Letter of Acceptance as Candidate
for Governor of New York
October 7, 1882

69. Members of the Congress, the Constitution makes us not rivals for power but partners for progress. We are all trustees for the American people, custodians of the American heritage. It is my task to report the State of the Union--to improve it is the task of us all.

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY
State of the Union Address
January 11, 1962

ARTICLE III -- THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

70. The legislative authority of any country can only be restrained by its own municipal constitution: This is a principle that springs

from the very nature of society; and the judicial authority can have no right to question the validity of a law, unless such a jurisdiction is expressly given by the constitution.

JOHN MARSHALL
Argument as Counsel in Ware v. Hylton
1796

71. The spirit of the Constitution and a due regard to justice require that all the States of the Union should be placed on the same footing in regard to the judicial tribunals.

FRANKLIN PIERCE
First Annual Message to Congress
December 5, 1853

72. The Constitution of the United States is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and in peace, and covers with the shield of its protection all classes of men, at all times and under all circumstances. No doctrine, involving more pernicious consequences, was ever invented by the wit of man than that any of its provisions can be suspended during any of the great exigencies of government.

DAVID DAVIS
Decision in Ex parte Milligan
1866

73. We are under a Constitution, but the Constitution is what the judges say it is, and the judiciary is the safeguard of our liberty and of our property under the Constitution.

CHARLES EVANS HUGHES
Address at Elmira, New York
May 3, 1907

ARTICLE IV -- DIRECTIONS FOR THE STATES

74. The proposed Constitution...is, in strictness, neither a national nor a federal Constitution, but a composition of both.

JAMES MADISON
Federalist Papers, Number 39
January 1788

75. Our country is too large to have all its affairs directed by a single government.... The true theory of our Constitution is surely the wisest and best, that the States are independent as to everything within themselves, and united as to everything respecting foreign nations.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to Gideon Granger
August 13, 1800

76. Where then is our republicanism to be found? Not in our constitution certainly, but merely in the spirit of our people.... The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen, in his person and property, and in their management.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to Samuel Kercheval
July 12, 1816

77. If the Federal Government will confine itself to the exercise of powers clearly granted by the Constitution, it can hardly happen that its action upon any question should endanger the institutions of the States or interfere with their right to manage matters strictly domestic according to the will of their own people.

FRANKLIN PIERCE
Inaugural Address
March 4, 1853

78. Equality among the States is equity. This equality is the very essence of the Constitution.

JAMES BUCHANAN
Veto Message
February 1, 1860

79. The Union is necessarily perpetual. No state can lawfully withdraw or be expelled from it. The Federal Constitution is as much a part of the constitution of every state as if it had been textually inserted therein.

JEREMIAH S. BLACK
Opinion as Secretary of State
December 17, 1860

ARTICLE V -- AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION

80. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole People, is sacredly obligatory upon all. If in the opinion of the People, the distribution or modification of the Constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Farewell Address
September 19, 1796

81. Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the Ark of the Covenant, too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment. I knew that age well; I belonged to it and labored with it. It deserved well of its country. It was very like the present, but without the experience of the present, and forty years of experience in government is worth a century of book-reading.... I am certainly not an advocate for frequent and untried changes in laws and constitutions.... But I know also, that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind.... We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him as a boy, as civilized society to remain under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to Samuel Kercheval
July 12, 1816

82. Constitutions should consist only of general provisions; the reason is that they must necessarily be permanent, and that they cannot calculate for the possible changes of things.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON
Speech in the New York Ratifying Convention
June 28, 1788

83. We have established a common Government, which being free in its principles, being founded in our own choice, being intended as the guardian of our common rights and the patron of our common interests, and wisely containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, as experience may point out its errors, seems to promise everything that

can be expected from such an institution; and if supported by wise councils, by virtuous conduct, and by mutual and friendly allowances, must approach as near to perfection as any human work can aspire, and nearer than any which the annals of mankind have recorded.

JAMES MADISON
Letter to George Washington
June 21, 1792

84. This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing Government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
First Inaugural Address
March 4, 1861

85. Amendments to the Constitution ought not too frequently to be made.... If continually tinkered with it will lose all its prestige and dignity, and the old instrument will be lost sight of altogether in a short time.

ANDREW JOHNSON
Speech in Washington, D.C.
February 22, 1866

86. The Constitution, with few amendments, exists as it left the hands of its authors.

WILLIAM MCKINLEY

87. I see where there is a bill up in Congress now to amend the Constitution. It means the men who drew up this thing years ago didn't know much, and we are just now getting a bunch of real fellows who can take the old parchment and fix it up like it should have been all these years.

WILL ROGERS

88. If the Constitution is to be construed to mean what the majority at any given period in history wish the Constitution to mean, why a written Constitution and deliberate processes of amendment?

FRANK J. HOGAN
Presidential Address before the
American Bar Association, San
Francisco, California
July 10, 1939

89. I think the Constitution is something that ought to be amended only after careful thought, not with any other purpose in mind except that of what over the years...is good for the United States.... I just don't believe we should amend...the Constitution every time we think a new law ought to be passed.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
Press Conference
May 13, 1959

ARTICLE VI -- RANKING OUR LAWS

90. The Constitution is the guide, which I never will abandon.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Address to the Boston Selectmen
July 28, 1795

91. Free government is founded in jealousy, and not in confidence.... In questions of power, then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
The Kentucky Resolutions
November 1798

92. The particular phraseology of the Constitution of the United States confirms and strengthens the principle, supposed to be essential to all written constitutions, that a law repugnant to the Constitution is void; and that courts, as well as other departments, are bound by that instrument.

JOHN MARSHALL
Marbury v. Madison
February 24, 1803

93. A constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory.... It is made for people of fundamentally differing views, and the accident of our finding certain opinions natural and familiar or novel and even shocking ought not to conclude our judgment upon the questions whether statutes embodying them conflict with the Constitution of the United States.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES
Dissenting Opinion in Lochner v. New York
April 17, 1905

94. The fundamental precept of liberty is toleration. We can not permit any inquisition either within or without the law or apply any religious test to the holding of office. The mind of America must be forever free.

CALVIN COOLIDGE
Inaugural Address
March 4, 1925

THE BILL OF RIGHTS
(THE FIRST TEN AMENDMENTS, RATIFIED IN 1791)

95. A Bill of Rights is what the people are entitled to against any government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to James Madison
December 20, 1787

96. From [the Bill of Rights comes] the fullest flowering of individual human personality.

HERBERT HOOVER
Speech in San Diego, California
1935

97. The greatest achievement ever made in the cause of human progress is the total and final separation of the state from the church. If we had nothing else to boast of, we could claim with justice that first among the nations we of this country made it an article of organic law that the relations between man and this Maker were a private concern into which other men had no right to intrude.

DAVID DUDLEY FIELD
Speech in Chicago, Illinois
1893

98. Keep your eye on the Constitution. This is the guarantee, that is the safeguard, that is the night watchman of democratic representative government--freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right of public assembly and the right to petition the government. Save all these things

in the Constitution and let the Supreme Court stand behind it, and then you can get off all the hot air in Congress and in the Senate that you want to.

ALFRED E. SMITH
Speech at Harvard University,
Cambridge, Massachusetts
June 22, 1933

99. The States should be left to do whatever acts they can do as well as the general government.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to John Harvie
July 25, 1790

100. I consider the foundation of the Constitution as laid on this ground: That 'all powers not delegated to the United States, by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states or to the people....'

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Opinion on the Constitutionality
of the Bill for Establishing a
National Bank
February 15, 1791

101. I wish to preserve the line drawn by the federal constitution between the general and particular governments...and to take every prudent means of preventing either from stepping over it.... It is easy to foresee, that the encroachments of the state governments will tend to an excess of liberty which will correct itself...while those of the general government will tend to monarchy, which will fortify itself from day to day, instead of working its own cure, as all experience shews. I would rather be exposed to the inconveniencies attending to too much liberty than those attending too small a degree of it.... It is important to strengthen the state governments.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to Archibald Stuart
December 23, 1791

102. I dare say that in time all the State governments as well as their central government, like the planets revolving round their common sun, acting and acted upon according to their respective weights and distances, will produce that beautiful equilibrium on which our Constitution is

founded, and which I believe it will exhibit to the world in a degree of perfection, unexampled but in the planetary system itself.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to Peregrine Fitzhugh
February 23, 1798

103. The usefulness and permanency of this Government and the happiness of the millions over whom it spreads its protection will be best promoted by carefully abstaining from the exercise of all powers not clearly granted by the Constitution.

JAMES KNOX POLK
Veto Message
December 15, 1847

104. Outside the Constitution we have no legal authority more than private citizens, and within it we have only so much as that instrument gives us. This broad principle limits all our functions and applies to all subjects.

ANDREW JOHNSON
Message to the House of
Representatives
March 2, 1867

ARTICLE VII -- RATIFICATION

105. I did myself the honor to forward to you the plan of Government formed by the Convention.... The public attention is, at present, wholly engrossed by this important subject. The Legislatures of those States (Rhode Island excepted) which have met since the Constitution has been formed, have readily assented to its being submitted to a Convention chosen by the People. Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware are the only States whose Conventions have as yet decided upon it. In the former it was adopted by 46 to 23 and in the latter two unanimously.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Letter to Thomas Jefferson
January 1, 1788

106. The accession of one State more will complete the number, which by the Constitutional provision, will be sufficient in the first instance to carry the Government into effect.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Letter to Marquis de Lafayette
June 19, 1788

107. I have the pleasure to inform your Excellency that the new Constitution proposed for the United States is finally established by the vote of nine states. New Hampshire acceded to it certainly on the 24th of June, and I have great reason to conclude that Virginia had done it some days before, in which case the vote of New Hampshire would be the tenth.

THOMAS JEFFERSON
Letter to Comte de Montmorin,
French Foreign Minister
July 30, 1788

108. We exhibit at present the novel and astonishing Spectacle of a whole People deliberating calmly on what form of government will be most conducive to their happiness; and deciding with an unexpected degree of unanimity in favor of a System which they conceive calculated to answer the purpose.

It is only necessary to add for your satisfaction, that, as all the States, which have yet acted and which are ten in number, have adopted the proposed Constitution; and as the concurrence of nine States was sufficient to carry it into effect in the first instance. It is expected the government will be in complete organization and execution before the commencement of the ensuing year.

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Letter to Sir Edward Newenham
August 29, 1788

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